

Month	Item
???	Medicaid reform, Operation Streamline (anything else from Streamline?)
June	Tort reform, 2 years
July	Budget surplus
July	Momentum Mississippi
August	Katrina
September	Upgrade Education
???	Workforce training and development
???	Adoption tax credit

– July

Wednesday, July 27, 2005

GOVERNOR HALEY BARBOUR SIGNS MOMENTUM MISSISSIPPI LEGISLATION INTO LAW

(Jackson, Miss.)—Flanked by business, education, civic and political leaders at the state Capitol, Governor Haley Barbour today conducted a ceremonial signing of the Momentum Mississippi bill, the state's new plan for recruiting higher-paying, higher-skilled jobs in the fastest-growing sectors of the economy.

Among those joining in the occasion were Anthony Topazi, president of Mississippi Power and chairman of a coalition of leaders who built grassroots support for the Momentum Mississippi legislative initiative; Blake Wilson, president of the Mississippi Economic Council; and Jay Moon, president of the Mississippi Manufacturers Association. Momentum Mississippi, which revamps the state's economic development program, was approved by the Legislature in a Special Session called by Governor Barbour earlier this month.

“It is only fitting that we gather today to thank lawmakers, business and civic leaders and the education community for their overwhelming support of Momentum Mississippi,” Governor Barbour said. “This initiative will help us make significant strides in successfully competing for higher-paying jobs in the fastest-growing sectors of the economy, particularly the high-tech field, and will also be a tremendous aid in encouraging existing businesses to stay in Mississippi and grow.”

“I share your excitement that the State of Mississippi has ushered in this kind of economic development momentum,” Governor Barbour said.

The Momentum Mississippi package reforms tax incentives, and funds state loan and grant programs. The legislation is designed to meet the needs of different businesses and industries in different regions of the state and help attract greater levels of investment and higher pay for Mississippi workers.

Tort reform – 2 years, June 16, 2004

GOVERNOR BARBOUR SIGNS LANDMARK LEGISLATION: TORT REFORM ACT OF 2004

Governor Says Mississippi Is Now A Fair Place For Job Creation

(Jackson, Miss.) – Governor Haley Barbour today signed the Tort Reform Act of 2004, alongside lawmakers, local community leaders, small businesses, the medical

community, manufacturers, the financial services sector and others who fought a long battle for the passage of legislation that effectively ends lawsuit abuse in Mississippi.

Governor Barbour thanked the House and Senate and others for their work. “As I sign this bill into law, I want to thank those who have worked so hard for the passage of meaningful tort reform,” said Governor Barbour. “It is a major achievement and a great day for Mississippi.”

On the same day as the signing, MassMutual Financial Group, a nationwide life insurance company, announced they are re-entering the market for Mississippi municipal bonds due to the recent passage of comprehensive tort reform. Last week Governor Barbour met with corporate leaders and media outlets in New York and Washington – including a speaking engagement to the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, who has ranked Mississippi last for a fair legal climate three years in a row – to officially announce the new civil justice legislation that makes Mississippi a more attractive place for industries to locate. “The time is now to tell job-creators and healthcare providers that our courtrooms are fair for everyone. I have already begun my quest to tell national business leaders to take another look at Mississippi, he added.”

“Because of this legislation, we’re going to make significant strides in reversing our bad reputation of being known as a ‘judicial hellhole.’ Businesses are already returning to Mississippi. If we want to create jobs, it’s time to start touting the good news,” Governor Barbour added.

The Governor unveiled an advertisement that he plans to run in national publications to get the message out about Mississippi tort reform.

Among the chief items included in HB 13 are: strong venue reform; reasonable limits on non-economic damage awards (\$500,000 for the medical industry and \$1 million for general businesses); strong joint and several liability reform; strong innocent retailer provisions; and sensible protections against punitive damages for medium and small businesses.

Medicaid reform – May

May 7, 2004

“I would like to thank Senators Nunnelee, Gordon and Burton, and Representatives Morris, Holland, and Dedeaux, for helping pass House Bill 1434 today. I especially want to commend the efforts of our Medicaid leader Dr. Warren Jones and his staff.

This is one of Mississippi’s most important pieces of Medicaid reform legislation in years, and the largest piece of ‘Operation: Streamline’ to come to my desk. It will save more than \$100 million for Mississippi taxpayers and enhance the quality of care for Medicaid recipients.”

Upgrade Mississippi - March 29, 2006

GOVERNOR BARBOUR SIGNS BILL TO “UPGRADE” PUBLIC EDUCATION

(Saltillo, Mississippi) – Flanked by students, teachers and administrators at Saltillo High School in Lee County, Governor Haley Barbour on Tuesday signed into law major reforms that he proposed to upgrade public education.

The bill Governor Barbour signed, Senate Bill 2602, contains a number of reforms designed to enhance public education, which he stressed is “the number one economic development issue and the number one quality of life issue in our state.”

Governor Barbour said 62 percent of the Mississippi budget goes for education. “Thanks to a multi-year commitment our public school teachers are making 30 percent more than five years ago. State spending on K-12 education is 7.2 percent, or \$143 million, higher than last year. Per student spending in our public schools is more than \$7,000 this year, a record amount,” he said.

He also noted that after several years of declining spending, more funding has been appropriated for universities and community colleges.

“Building a stronger education system has always been about more than money. UpGrade is not about funding; it’s about fundamentals. The bills I am signing here today are integral pieces of a concept that has become a reality,” Governor Barbour said.

The proposals under the umbrella of the UpGrade Education reforms were developed with strong support from Governor Barbour’s 250 member Teachers Advisory Commission.

Among the reforms are these:

- Liberate successful schools from repetitive bureaucracy. Schools that achieve Level 4 and 5 accreditation ratings will be freed from some of the cumbersome oversight from Jackson. As a result, the State Department of Education can better focus its resources on the lower performing schools, where the attention is most needed.
- Home rule. Home rule gives all districts the operational freedom they need to do what we all are working toward: higher student achievement. With the passage of UpGrade, local educators now have the freedom, authority, and explicit encouragement to think and act creatively to raise student achievement.
- Focus on dropout prevention. Nearly 40 percent of Mississippi school children drop out before they graduate. UpGrade creates a position within the Department of Education whose responsibility it will be to dramatically lower this number in the next three years.
- Prioritize teacher recruitment and retention. This includes establishment of a teacher pay for performance program that rewards schools that show the greatest increases in student test scores from year to year, and establishment of a middle school mentor teacher corps that would pay \$1,000 to teachers who are willing to serve in positions to strengthen policies on discipline.
- Redesign high schools. A recent national report suggested that 75 percent of high school dropouts did so with passing grades, shattering the myth that they couldn’t handle the academics. The facts are that students become disengaged and are not challenged by the curriculum. UpGrade makes significant changes by doing the following:
 - Establishes a dual credit system. Beginning next school year, if a student at, for example, Saltillo High School wants to take a math or science class needed for graduation at Tupelo’s Advanced Education Center (where Ole Miss, MUW, and Itawamba Community College offer courses) they can do so and earn credit towards their college degree at the same time.
 - Requires that Advance Placement (AP) courses be made available in every school district

- Creates the Mississippi Virtual Public School where students can take courses for credit that might not be offered in their own school. This initiative takes advantage of investments in public education by corporations to expand the use of technology, online education and distance learning so every child can have access to the best education.

“We must constantly pursue innovative, creative policies that help us achieve greater increases in learning. UpGrade does that,” Governor Barbour said.

Katrina – August